

**NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD**

ANIMAL TRAILS AND WALKWAYS

(Ft.)

CODE 575

DEFINITION

Established lanes or travelways that facilitate animal movement.

PURPOSES

- Provide or improve access to forage, water, working/handling facilities, and/or shelter.
- Improve grazing efficiency and distribution.
- Protect ecologically sensitive, erosive, and/or potentially erosive sites.

CONDITIONS WHERE THIS PRACTICE APPLIES

On lands where control of animal movement is needed.

CRITERIA

General Criteria Applicable to All Purposes

All planned work shall comply with all local, state, tribal, and federal laws and permit conditions and requirements. The landowner shall obtain all necessary permits prior to construction or any land-clearing activities.

Animal trails or walkways shall be constructed wide enough to accommodate movement of animals and access by operator for management and maintenance.

Cultural resources, threatened or endangered species, wetlands, streambanks, floodways, ecologically sensitive areas, and areas of special scenic value will be protected through the proper design and placement of trails or walkways.

Trails or walkways shall be constructed in such a manner that accelerated erosion will not occur. Where necessary, diversions with a stable outlet will be provided. Surfaces shall be crowned or outsloped, as needed.

[Conservation Practice Standard \(CPS\) 578, Stream Crossing](#), will be used when animal trails or walkways cross streams or other shallow water bodies.

Sensitivity of animals' feet (with respect to the intended purpose of trails or walkways) shall be included as a design parameter in selecting the surface material for trails or walkways.

If trails or walkways are seeded or planted to vegetative cover, vegetation will be protected from grazing until fully established and capable of withstanding grazing and/or trampling. Vegetative cover shall be established in accordance with [CPS 342, Critical Area Planting](#). Where maintaining vegetative cover is necessary but not possible, [CPS 561, Heavy Use Area Protection](#), will be used to provide adequate surface protection.

[CPS 382, Fence](#), shall be used when needed to keep animals confined to trails or walkways until the desired destination is reached.

Additional Criteria Applicable to Providing or Improving Access to Forage, Water, Working/Handling Facilities, and/or Shelter

Trails and walkways shall be designed and constructed of sufficient size to accommodate the expected frequency of use and animal type(s) planned for the operation.

When needed to facilitate movement of animals through a series of paddocks or pastures, gate

openings and lane layouts shall allow for efficient flow of animals with the least amount of stress.

Additional Criteria Applicable to Improving Grazing Efficiency and Distribution

Fenced or unfenced animal trails or walkways will be used to distribute grazing to overcome terrain features causing uneven grazing distribution and pressure.

CONSIDERATIONS

[CPS 528, Prescribed Grazing](#), can be used to further improve grazing distribution and pressure.

Other conservation practice standards such as [472, Access Control](#), can be used in conjunction with trails or walkways to minimize the impact on sensitive areas.

Consider the adequacy of natural cover in lieu of seeding or planting trails or walkways to vegetative cover.

For areas of high livestock concentration such as around ponds, tanks, troughs, or other feeding areas, use [CPS 561, Heavy Use Area Protection](#).

Consider limiting width to prevent usage as a roadway. For travelways used by vehicles or equipment for purposes other than management and maintenance of animal trails or walkways, use [CPS 560, Access Road](#).

Consider the use of water bars, culverts, or other measures to control and direct water flow.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Plans and specifications for installing animal trails or walkways shall be in keeping with this standard and shall describe the requirements for applying the practice to achieve its intended purpose. Plans and specifications shall include construction plans, drawings, job sheets, or other similar documents. These documents shall specify the requirements for installing the practice, including the location and the kind, amount, and quality of materials to be used.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

The [operation and maintenance \(O&M\) plan](#) shall specify that the trails or walkways and associated practices be inspected annually and after significant storm events to identify any repair and maintenance needs.

The [O&M plan](#) shall detail the level of repairs needed to maintain the effectiveness and useful life of the practice. These repairs should include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Periodic grading or reshaping trails or walkways to maintain the designed grade and dimensions.
- Periodic addition of surfacing materials where used.
- Reseeding of areas in which the vegetation has been damaged or destroyed.
- Mending of fences and replacement of gates.

Periodic removal and management of manure accumulations will be addressed in the O&M plan.

For multiple adjacent vegetated walkways, the [O&M plan](#) should provide guidance as to the rotation of walkways to allow for recovery of vegetation and for improvement of traffic-supporting conditions.

REFERENCES

Heady, H.F., and R.D. Child. 1994. Rangeland ecology and management. Western Press.

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USDA-NRCS. 2003. National Range and Pasture Handbook, Revision 1. Washington, DC.

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Wood, Gene. 2007. Recreational horse trails in rural and wildland areas: design, construction, and maintenance. Clemson University.